

ON TASTE.

" Whose fate is still to yearn and not be satisfied."

THE uncertainty and variety of taste is, I suppose, universally acknowledged, if we may judge from the frequency with which the many proverbs concerning it are in every one's mouth. I do not know that it is to the physical sense they are applied most frequently, but of all our "senses" this "taste" seems to be the most capacious and wilful and unreasonable and unaccountable; the most individual and personal too, and undoubtedly the most dogmatic; brooking no contradiction, and asserting absolutely, unless put down by a stronger hand than most people think it worth while to erect against it.

In matters of sight, hearing, smell, touch, we reckon on a certain agreement with other people, and appeal to their corresponding "sense" to corroborate testimony and support assertions. These are difficulties in degree and power, indeed, and one person sees beauty of form or grace in arrangement, and variety in colour, where another receives but a general, and perhaps vague, impression. One may hear

" A lingering harmony in ocean shells,
And pleasant music in the meadow bells,"

when another hears but the dull plash of the waves or the careless clatter of the sparrows; but this latter is from want of habits of observation, and as far as the outward senses go, these are, up to a certain point, much the same in every one.

But taste, there is "no accounting" for it. That "tastes differ," has become such a recognised point, that it is *the one* on which most people are commonly content to let each other alone, because they do not expect agreement, and because they regard it as fortunate that every one does not like the same things. So, though wonder may be expressed at the incongruities of taste, little effort is made to reconcile or account for them. Probably they *could* often be accounted for either by early training, habit, natural constitution, or prejudice. Though for the matter of training, children's tastes are not uncommonly yielded to, and left to bring themselves up, perhaps from a tacit acknowledgement of the individuality of this wayward and capricious sense, perhaps from powerlessness to control it, perhaps from its close connection with our physical well-being. But, like all our other bodily senses, it grows and strengthens, and becomes confirmed with years, and though it might be a hopeless